

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJ: EVALUATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS/THAI PROGRAM FOR DRUG

ABUSE CONTROL

SUMMARY. A UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL EVALUATION TEAM VISITED THAILAND IN OCTOBER TO ASSESS THE UNFDAC THAILAND PROJECT AFTER TWO AND A HALF YEARS OF OPERATION AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT FOLLOWS WITH OUR COMMENTS. COPIES OF THE REPORT WILL BE FORWARDED BY POUCH. WE ENDORSE THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND BELIEVE THAT THE THAILAND PROJECT IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK, ALTHOUGH SUFFERING FROM THE INTERMITTANT CHARACTER OF RTG SUPPORT AND BUREAUCRATIC INFIGHTING AMONG THE RTG AGENCIES OPERATING IN THE HILLTRIBE AREA. THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS REACTED FAVORABLY TO THE REPORT AND HAS PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE PROJECT INTO 120 MORE VILLAGES USING RTG RESOURCES. CONTINUED U.S. SUPPORT FOR UNFDAC'S BUDGET, HOWEVER, IS ESSENTIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE UNITED NATIONS/THAI PROGRAM FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL (UNPDAC) IS AT THE MID-POINT IN ITS FIVE YEAR LIFE.

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FROM OCTOBER 1-23, 1975, AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION TEAM CON-

SISTING OF MR. N.G. ROLPH, FORMER COMMISSIONER OF NARCOTICS IN HONG KONG, AND MR. A. SORENSEN, AN AGRONOMIST WITH PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THAILAND, VISITED THAILAND TO EXAMINE UNPDAC RESULTS TO DATE AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. THE COMPLETED EVALUATION REPORT HAS JUST RECENTLY BEEN PASSED TO THE EMBASSY. ITS MAJOR CONCLUSIONS FOLLOW:

A. RTG INVOLVEMENT - PERHAPS THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF THE REPORT IS ITS REPEATED CALL FOR THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT (RTG) TO MAKE A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT DECISIONS THAT WOULD COMMIT IT TO MUCH CLOSER INVOLVEMENT WITH UNPDAC'S ULTIMATE GOAL OF REDUCING OPIUM CULTIVATION IN NORTHERN THAILAND. THE MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

--THE RTG IS INVITED TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING A "CONSTITUTIONAL BASE" FOR THE PROGRAM-I.E., TO PROVIDE IT WITH A CENTRAL POINT OF SUPERVISION AND, PRESUMABLY, TO DEFEND IT AS NECESSARY. THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE IS MENTIONED AS AN APPROPRIATE HOME FOR THE PROGRAM. (THE PROJECT CURRENTLY IS HANDLED AS A STEPCHILD AND IS SOMEWHAT BUFFETED AMONG THE BUREAUCRATIC PLAYERS AND THE KING'S HILLTRIBE PROJECT.)

--NOTING THAT THE RTG HAS "NO PARTICULAR PLANS AIMED AT MARKETING OPIUM REPLACEMENT CROPS BEYOND NORMAL COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS," THE REPORT SUGGESTS THAT THE RTG SHOULD DEVOTE ITS ATTENTION TO THE MARKETING PROBLEM AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

--THE REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT THE RTG PREPARE A PLAN FOR THE PHASED DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRENT PILOT PROJECT SO THAT THERE WILL BE NO LOSS OF MOMENTUM WHEN THE MOMENT COMES FOR EXTENSION OF THE PROJECT BY THE RTG.

--THE RTG IS INVITED TO DRAW UP A PLAN FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE VILLAGES WHEN EACH HAS APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME.

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--THE RTG IS INVITED TO "GET TO SERIOUS GRIPS" WITH THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF LAND TENURE IN THE HIGHLANDS "WITHOUT DELAY."

B. WILL CROP SUBSTITUTION WORK? THE EVALUATION TEAM POINTS TO THE REDUCTION OF OPIUM CULTIVATION IN UNPDAC VILLAGES AS A SIGN THAT CROP SUBSTITUTION WILL WORK. HOWEVER, THE REPORT CAUTIONS THAT REPLACEMENT OF OPIUM

POPPY CULTIVATION IN NORTHERN THAILAND IS A LONG TERM EFFORT. BASED ON THIS ASSESSMENT, THE REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT THE PROJECT BE CONTINUED UNTIL THE END OF ITS FIVE YEAR TERM. PLANNING SHOULD ALSO GO AHEAD FOR "PHASED EXPANSION AT THE END OF THE PILOT PERIOD AT MEASURED AND DELIBERATE PACE COMMENSURATE WITH THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE." THE EVALUATORS COMMENT THAT THEY BELIEVE UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE WILL BE REQUIRED BEYOND THE FIVE YEAR PERIOD BUT SUGGEST THAT THIS BE EXAMINED IN MORE DETAIL BY THE EXTENSION PLANNERS.

C. TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION. THE REPORT CONCLUDES THAT THE TREATMENT AND REHAZILITATION SECTOR OF THE PROGRAM IS NOT WORKING PROPERLY AND PROPOSES THAT THIS SECTOR BE REALIGNED TO FOCUS ONLY ON THE HIGHLAND VILLAGES.

D. POSSIBILITY OF ELIMINATING OPIUM PRODUCTION AT A FASTER PACE. THE REPORT CONCLUDES THAT RAPIDLY EXPANDING THE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM BY OFFERING SUBSTITUTE CROPS TO LARGE NUMBERS OF VILLAGES WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ENFORCING THE OPIUM GROWING BAN AND GUARANTEEING AN INCOME EQUIVALENT TO OPIUM INCOME IN CASE OF CROP FAILURE IS NOT LIKELY TO WORK AT PRESENT. FOUR REASONS ARE CITED:

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--THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A LARGE INJECTION OF OVER-
SEAS AID TO GUARANTEE THE ALTER-
NATE CROPS. IF THE AID
WERE CUT OFF, OPIUM PRODUCTION WOULD PROBABLY BE RESUMED
ON AN EVEN LARGER SCALE.

--THERE WOULD BE AN IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENT FOR A
MASSIVE INJECTION OF SUITABLE REPLACEMENT CROPS AND
SEEDS WHICH ARE NOT NOW AVAILABLE.

--THE POLICE REQUIRED TO ENFORCE SUCH A SCHEME ARE
NOT AVAILABLE.

--ELIMINATING OPIUM CULTIVATION REQUIRES CONVINCING
PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR WHOLE WAY OF LIFE. THIS WILL TAKE
A LONG TIME.

2. MISSION COMMENTS: IN OUR VIEW THE MAJOR SHORTCOMING
OF THE UN PROJECT TO DATE HAS BEEN ITS INABILITY TO BRING
THE RTG INTO ITS OPERATIONS. THIS HAS RESULTED IN CONSI-
DERABLE BUREAUCRATIC SQUABBLING AND MORE IMPORTANTLY HAS
LEFT THE FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION OF THE FIVE
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YEAR PILOT PROJECT IN DOUBT. THE UNPDAC EVALUATION REPORT
CORRECTLY IDENTIFIES THE NEED FOR DIRECT RTG INVOLVEMENT,
AND WE SUPPORT ITS SUGGESTIONS.

3# A SPECIFIC PROBLEM THE REPORT IDENTIFIES IS THE LACK
OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN OPIUM PRODUCING VILLAGES. UN
OFFICIALS AGREE THAT AFTER ALTERNATE SOURCES OF INCOME
HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED AND HAVE BEEN AT LEAST PARTIALLY
ACCEPTED BY THE VILLAGE PEOPLE, THAI POLICE WILL HAVE TO
STEP IN AND ENFORCE THE RTG LEGAL BAN ON POPPY CULTIVA-
TION, IN EFFECT SINCE 1959 BUT NOT ENFORCED. WE STRONGLY
ENDORSE THIS POSITION. BECAUSE OF THE REMOTENESS OF THE
HILLTRIBE VILLAGES AND THE PR-
ESENT LACK OF ANY PERMANENT
GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IN THE HILLS, HOWEVER, THE RTG WILL
MOVE SLOWLY IN THIS DIRECTION. WHATEVER WE AND
THE UN CAN DO TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE RTG IN THIS REGARD
WILL BE USEFUL.

4. THE UN EVALUATION IS SUBJECT TO CRITICISM IN ITS
FAILURE TO RECOMMEND EXPANSION OF THE PROJECT TO MORE
VILLAGES IN NORTHERN THAILAND. IN MANY OF THE 30 VILLAGES
ASSOCIATED WITH THE UN PROJECT THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFI-

CANT REDUCTION IN POPPY PRODUCTION, AND THE EVALUATION CONCLUDES THAT THE PROJECT HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT REDUCTION OF POPPY PRODUCTION IS POSSIBLE. THE PROJECT APPEARS TO BE RIPE FOR EXPANSION INTO A LARGER NUMBER OF THE 500 TO 1000 OPIUM PRODUCING VILLAGES OF NORTHERN THAILAND. THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION OF THE EVALUATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT UNPDAC/THAILAND IS ONLY A PILOT PROJECT AND WAS NEVER INTENDED TO REACH LARGE NUMBERS OF VILLAGES BY ITSELF. RATHER, IN THE UN PIEW, THE RTG MUST CARRY EXPANSION INTO MORE VILLAGES, BUILDING ON THE UNPDAC'S SUCCESSFUL START. THE EVALUATION, IN FACT, SUGGESTS WHAT ACTIONS THE RTG SHOULD TAKE TO CARRY OUT A EFFECTIVE EXPANSION.

5. DESPITE THE REPORT'S CONSERVATIVE VIEW ON EXPANSIONN AT THIS TIME, THE INITIAL RTG REACTION IS ENCOURAGING. THE RTG APPEARS TO BE READY TO PUT ITS OWN PERSONNEL AND BUDGET INTO EXPANDING THE PROJECT. DURING THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 8, RTG BUDGET BUREAU OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (DTEC) VISITED UNPDAC KEY VILLAGES IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE ANDDECIDED THAT THEY WOULD ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE PROJECT. IAN WILLIAMS, UNPDAC PROJECT DIRECTOR, HAS BEE REQUESTED TO DRAW UP A WORK PLAN FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS THAT WOULD EXPAND THE PROJECT BY STAGES TO 120 MORE OPIUM PRODUCING VILLAGES IN THE NORTH. UNDER THE PLAN, UNPDAC WILL CONTINUE TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM WHILE THE RTG PROVIDES PERSONNEL (FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE) AND FUNDS FROM ITS BUDGET.

6. AFTER A SLOW START AND SOME ERRORS (SUCH AS A CONTINUALLY INEFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR TRAINING HILLTRIBE EXTENSION WORKERS), THE PROJECT APPEARS TO BE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. WITH ELEMENTS OF THE RTG NOW SHOWING INTEREST IN FINANCING EXPANSION OF THE PROJECT, PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS THE LONG TERM GOAL OF SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING OPIUM PRODUCTION IN NORTHERN THAILAND. ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS GOAL WILL NOT BE EASY, HOWEVER, AND WE ARE STILL SPEAKING OF PROJECTS THAT WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE FOR SOME YEARS BEFORE LASTING RESULTS WILL BE OBTAINED. A LARGER PROBLEM IS BURMA, WHERE THE BULK OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE'S OPIUM IS GROWN. THE UN IS ONE THE VERGE OF SIGNING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GUB AND WE WOULD HOPE THE EXPERIENCE GRAINED IN THE THAI PROGRAM WILL BE OF VALUE IN GETTING THE UN OFF TO A FASTER START IN BURMA.

7. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE UNPDAC HAS BEEN A QUALIFIED SUCCESS IN THAILAND AND THAT IT IS IN OUR BEST INTERESTS

TO ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF THE EFFORT. CONTINUED US
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE UN FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL
IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN MAINTAINING AND HOPEFULLY
ACCELERATING THE MOMENTUM OF THE PROJECT IN THAILAND.
MASTERS

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